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ABSTRACT

A project to develop word lists for first-year English as a second language instruction at Osaka Jogakuin Junior College (Japan) is described. The lists were drawn from high-frequency vocabulary lists, with word selection based on course unit themes and rhetorical patterns. These include: introduction/people and places; women's issues; internationalization; human rights; media and consumer society; and social responsibility. Some additional words, not based on unit content, were also included. The final selections are presented. Future steps to be taken in developing appropriate vocabulary lists are discussed. (Contains 13 references.) (MSE)

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Abstract

Vocabulary is important to learners of a second language for many reasons. A faulty vocabulary limits comprehension. It makes production difficult. It hinders communication. Studies have shown that if students are to learn a large amount of vocabulary, especially academic vocabulary, in a short time, direct instruction is very efficient. (Paribakht & Wesche, 1997; Zimmerman, 1994 in Coady & Huckin, 1997) Because of Osaka Jogakuin Junior College's (OJJC) curriculum's emphasis on meaningful themes, random study of vocabulary is undesirable. This paper describes a preliminary vocabulary project using high frequency lists to develop word lists which can be integrated into the existing first year program at OJJC. It describes how the words were selected, provides the actual word lists along with descriptions of the units they belong with, and finally discusses future steps that need to be taken before implementing a complete vocabulary program.

Key words : vocabulary, high frequency words, oral communication, content-based, meaningful themes, vocabulary list

(Received September 8, 1997)

抄　　録

第二言語習得過程において、ボキャブラリーは理解度、コミュニケーションに大きく影響すると考えられている。短期間の専門語彙の学習に際して、直接的な指導は有効であるという研究もされている（Paribakht & Wesche, 1997; Zimmerman, 1994 in Coady & Huckin, 1997）。本稿では、高頻度語彙リストをもとに、大阪女学院短期大学一回生向けカリキュラム（英文講読、英文作法、オーラルイングリッシュの三科目が一つのテーマに添って授業を進めるプログラム）のための、ボキャブラリーリスト作成準備段階を報告する。語彙の選択方法、大阪女学院短期大学一回生に対してのプログラム、プログラム用に作成したボキャブラリーリストを紹介し、今後の課題を述べる。

キーワード：ボキャブラリー、高頻度語彙、オーラルコミュニケーション、内容中心、関連性を持ったテーマ、ボキャブラリーリスト

（1997年9月8日　受理）

Introduction

Vocabulary is important to learners of a second language for many reasons. A faulty vocabulary limits comprehension. It makes production difficult. It hinders communication. Yet, until recently vocabulary has not received priority in second language acquisition research nor in the second language classroom, (Zimmerman, 1997) even though students think that it is important. (Leki & Carson, 1994 & Sheorey & Mokhtari, 1993 in Coady & Huckin, 1997) Why has there been so little emphasis on vocabulary even though students think learning words is important? Coady outlines the following attitudes toward teaching/learning vocabulary which may shed light on this question:

- . . .teachers tend to feel that words are easy to learn—grammar is the challenge.
- Many teachers. . .feel that teaching vocabulary is a low-level intellectual activity unworthy of their full attention.
- Both teachers and students feel that the productive areas of language use (speaking and writing) are much harder to achieve than the receptive areas of listening and reading.
- Almost all methodological approaches encourage both teacher and learners to assume that the skill of reading is transferred automatically from L1.
- Consequently, many teachers. . .seem to conclude that words are going to be learned naturally. . .and do not need to be taught. (1997 p. 274)

However, studies have shown that if students need to learn a large amount of vocabulary, especially academic vocabulary, in a short time, direct instruction on top of reading is very efficient. (Paribakht & Wesche, 1997; Zimmerman, 1994 in Coady & Huckin, 1997)

If learning vocabulary is an important part of achieving competency in a second language, what are we as teachers to do? Existing research shows that vocabulary programs need to be well-planned; they should not be done haphazardly. Nation describes three areas that should be considered in planning a vocabulary program. They are summarized as follows:

1. Good control of high frequency words is important to students before they begin studying less frequent vocabulary.
2. Correct sequencing of vocabulary is important to keep vocabulary learning from being difficult.
3. Careful design of of vocabulary activities can greatly increase the

quality of learning. (1994 p. iv.)

This paper describes a preliminary vocabulary project using high frequency lists to develop word lists which can be integrated with the existing first year units at Osaka Jogakuin Junior College (OJJC). It will first describe how words were selected, and then will provide the lists along with descriptions of the units they belong to. Finally it will discuss future steps that need to be taken to implement a complete vocabulary program.

The Process of Creating the Word Lists

OJJC is a two year junior college with one major—English. The student body consists of approximately 800 students equally divided between the years. Most students are highly motivated to improve their English ability. At OJJC the major English component in the first year curriculum consists of three courses: Reading, Oral, and Composition. Over the course of the year, students study six units, each of which combines a thematic component and a rhetorical component. The six units are referred to as "Integrated Units" because the various themes and rhetorical patterns are covered at the same time by reading, oral and composition classes. Table 1 lists the themes and rhetorical patterns.

Table 1: OJJC's Integrated Units themes and Rhetorical Patterns

Unit	Theme	Rhetorical Pattern
One	Introduction/People and Places	Illustration
Two	Women's Issues	Process
Three	Internationalization	Definition
Four	Human Rights	Classification
Five	Media and Consumer Society	Compare/Contrast
Six	Social Responsibility	Persuasion

(Adapted from *Making the transition from writing short essays to long research papers*, Cornwell & McKay, in Press)

Organized word lists do not currently exist for OJJC's integrated units, but they could serve as a starting point from which to develop an integrated vocabulary learning program. Since both authors teach the same students in their Oral English and Reading classes, respectively, this pilot development of words lists would be the first step in seeing if a vocabulary program could be integrated within the same section of reading and oral classes.

Because of OJJC's emphasis on meaningful themes, random study of vocabulary is undesirable. Therefore, any vocabulary lists developed should be connected with the various themes used in OJJC's integrated units. So the question is how to develop appropriate lists of vocabulary. We decided to start by using high frequen-

cy words.

Nation defines high frequency words as being "words that are used very often in normal language use in all four skills and across the full range of situations of use." (Nation, 1994 p. 3) What makes a word high frequency or low frequency is often arbitrarily decided. It is commonly accepted that the high frequency vocabulary consists of 2,000 word families and that these 2,000 words make up about 87% of all words in written texts. (Nation, 1990)

There are many frequency lists of words. (For an introduction to the various lists available see Bauman, 1995a). In starting to make our lists, we decided to begin by looking at a modified version of the General Service List (Bauman, 1995b) based on West's GSL list (1953). "The GSL is a set of 2,000 words selected to be of the greatest general service to learners of English. They are not the most common 2,000 words though frequency was one of the factors taken into account in making the selection." (Bauman, 1995b)

After examining the GSL we came to the conclusion that our students would already know most of the words, and thus, words drawn from the GSL would serve primarily as a review device. While review of vocabulary is important, our goal was to form word lists that would increase the students' high-frequency vocabulary. Since the GSL did not appear to meet our goal, we next looked at the University Word List. The UWL is a list of 808 specialized vocabulary words intended for students who plan to study in an English-language college developed by Xue and Nation in 1984. Nation estimates that words in the UWL make up 8% of the words in an average academic text. (Bauman, 1995b)

After looking at the UWL we felt students would not know most of the words in it. Also, by using the UWL we felt that a type of synergy would be created. Students would be learning specialized academic vocabulary that would be useful in the content-based courses they would be taking as second year students, and at the same time they would be learning vocabulary that we felt would be helpful in the various integrated units.

Sitting down to go over the words forced us to deal with the question, "How do we decide how to assign specific words to the thematic units?" Since it wasn't our intention to attempt to teach all the words, we decided to go with our intuition, based on our experience and understanding of the thematic units. Thus, which words were assigned to which unit was a subjective decision. However, it is important to note that subjective assignment doesn't mean the lists were created arbitrarily.[1] The specific process we used follows.

We went through the UWL together five times; once for each of units 2-5. (We

decided to omit unit 1, an introductory unit.) We then went through the list once more to select any words that we thought were important in and of themselves, but for some reason had not been selected for any unit. As we went through the list we called out words we thought might apply to the unit. Together, we then responded with, "Yes, put it in the list;" "No, it's a good word but the students probably already know it;" or "No, it's not such an important word."

Our goal was to create a list of 40 to 50 words for each unit. Of course if other teachers repeated this process, their lists might be very different. Future lists might be developed by having several teachers chose words from the UWL and then combine the lists to come up with 40 or 50 common words. The following section will briefly describe the thematic unit and then list the vocabulary selected for each unit.

Unit Descriptions and Word Lists (from OJJC catalog, 1997)

Unit Descriptions

Unit 2 (Women's Issues: Process)

Topic:

1. To speak, read and write about women's issues concerning marriage, family and career.

Expository Method:

1. To be able to give accurately and clearly the steps explaining how something happens or telling how to do something
2. To become familiar with chronological time order and the transitions used
3. To write an original paragraph

Women's Issues Word List

accomplish achieve adjust adjust adolescent alternative appreciate approach aspiration assert attitude authorize aware capable career compensate complex conflict confront congress consent contemplate contradict contribute dedicate democracy demonstrate devote diverse domestic dominate drastic economy embrace enhance exert explicit friction frustrate fulfill fundamental identify implement income incompatible individual inferior instruct integrate interact intimacy involve justify legitimate manifest manipulate myth negative parliament persist perspective priority protest pursue reform reinforce release sanction sibling stable circumstance status stipulate superficial superimpose superior suppress temporary tolerate transform transition underlie valid voluntary

Unit 3 (Internationalization & Culture: Definition)

Topic:

1. To help make students aware of "internationalization"
2. To help students become sensitive to other races
3. To introduce information to students about other countries and people

Expository Method:

1. To give practice in explaining the meaning of a concept through extended definition
2. To be able to give a clear logical definition
3. To write an original definition paragraph

Internationalization & Culture Word List

conceive conclude conserve consult correspond dissipate ensure enumerate equivalent establish function incentive intervene maintain oblige obvious pertinent plead predict proclaim signify undertake

Unit 4 (Human Rights: Classification)

Topic:

1. To be able to state the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
2. To be able to state the 1959 United Nations' Declaration on the Rights of the Child
3. To recognize four types of prejudice in action
4. To recognize three types of responses to prejudice or discrimination
5. To think of ways to deal with, overcome, or eliminate prejudice in action in individual or group situations

Expository Method:

1. To recognize the similarities between a paragraph's topic sentence, details, and concluding sentence and an essay's thesis, body, and conclusion
2. To divide a concrete and abstract topic into categories
3. To prepare parallel lists of information describing each category
4. To write a multi-paragraph classification essay about Human Rights

Human Rights Word List

acquire adapt appreciate ascribe atmosphere complement complicate conform controversy crucial dissolve eliminate embody emphasize enlighten estimate

ethics exclude expand facilitate formulate identical illuminate interpret motive norm obsolete pervade positive precede premise presume propagate proportion refine reluctance repudiate speculate spontaneous stereotype subjective tense uniform vary

Unit 5 (Consumer Society and Advertising: Comparison and Contrast)

Topic:

1. To become more aware of how advertising affects us
2. To discuss similarities and differences
3. To use comparison and contrast phrases
4. To discuss using notions of agreement and disagreement

Expository Method:

1. To continue working on the essay form
2. To distinguish the similarities and differences between two concepts
3. To write an original composition using comparison and contrast

Consumer Society and Advertising Word List

abandon advocate attain bureaucracy category civic collapse commit congress constitute credible crisis degrade deprive detriment displace doctrine emancipate environment execute exploit fate federal finance fragment guarantee hostile ignore imperial implicit impress incident indigenous inhibit innate invoke isolate legal legislate neutral parliament participate policy prohibit region repress restore restrict starve territory terror treaty

Unit 6 (Social Responsibility & Awareness: Persuasion)

Topic:

1. To see the difference between an emotional argument and a rational argument
2. To learn to speak/write persuasively
3. To practice giving reasons and counter-arguments in a serious, rational manner
4. To use vocabulary words dealing with persuasion

Expository Method:

1. To learn about different methods of persuasion
2. To learn to present a personal viewpoint
3. To write an original essay which convinces the reader that viewpoint is

correct or moves the reader to action or both

Social Responsibility & Awareness Word List

aesthetic affluence appeal arouse attribute capture commodity consume contrast criterion eloquent evaluate evoke feature impulse induce niche phenomena prestige principle sophisticated statistic stimulate tone vague

Additional Words not Unit Based

adjacent allocate alter anonymous assess assign concept deliberate elaborate eventual hierarchy inconsistent ingenious liberate modify pragmatic provoke refute simultaneous subordinate subsequent suspend tentative withdraw

Future Steps

As mentioned earlier, the project described in this paper is very subjective. Both how the words were chosen and which words were excluded from the lists were totally dependent on two teachers' opinions. However, all of the words come from a high frequency list that students of academic English should know. Furthermore, the words have been assigned to a thematic unit where they can be used by reading, oral, and composition classes. Before a comprehensive vocabulary program might be developed, what are some additional steps that should be taken?

In making the lists rather than guessing which words students might or might not know it world be better to test their vocabulary levels. While a test could not tell us exactly students' vocabulary level, it could tell us where students should begin their study. One test that can pinpoint students' vocabulary level rather easily is the Vocabulary Levels Test by Nation. (1980) The test is divided into five levels: 2,000 word level, 3,000 word level, university word level, 5,000 word level, and 10,000 word level. Each level of the test consists of six sections with six words and three definitions in each section (See Appendix One for an example of the first level of the test). If someone scores 12 or less on one level of the test, it is worthwhile having that learner study vocabulary at that level. (Nation, 1980)

Also, while having more teachers participate in making the word lists would not take away the subjectivity, it might help achieve a consensus on what to teach. As the list stands now, some teachers might not know how a certain word relates to a certain topic. For example, how does "conclude" fit in with the unit on Internationalization, or "refine" with the unit on Human Rights?

This brings me to another step that needs to be taken in developing a vocabulary program.

The words on the list should be contextualized. At the very least each word needs to appear in a sentence to show how it is used. Better still would be the development of reading and listening materials where students can encounter the words repeatedly in topic-related paragraphs/essays and recordings. In addition to receptive material, appropriate teaching material needs to be developed. Research has shown that high frequency vocabulary is best taught directly while the teaching of vocabulary learning strategies best helps students with low frequency vocabulary. (Nation, 1980) The development of this kind of material would help students learn the words and would help teachers present the words.

One challenge that teaching vocabulary presents is the individual nature of the task. When a student knows 12 out of 18 words on the levels test it means that she should know about 2/3rds of the words at that level. But different students know different words, so at any level some students will know some words. Other students will know different words. So any program dealing with vocabulary has to allow students to learn the words they don't know without going over words they do know. Of course, this raises the question, What does it mean to know a word? In *New Ways in Teaching Vocabulary* Nation (1994) provides the following list of aspects involved in knowing a word:

1. Being able to recognize the spoken form of the word.
2. Being able to pronounce the word.
3. Being able to spell the word.
4. Being able to write the word.
5. Knowing the underlying meaning of the word.
6. Knowing the range of meanings of the word.
7. Knowing the grammatical patterns the word fits into.
8. Knowing the affixes the word stem can take
9. Knowing the words that fit into the same lexical sets
10. Knowing the typical associations of the word.
11. Knowing the range of collocations of the word.
12. Knowing whether the use of the word is limited by considerations of politeness, gender, age, country, formality, and so on.
13. Knowing whether the word is commonly used or not.
14. Being able to use the word receptively and productively.

(pp. 121-122)

In addition to the individual nature of vocabulary learning, another challenge is that all first year integrated classes (Reading, Oral, Composition) have very limited time

to accomplish the many things they need to do. The time in each class is already filled, perhaps with more than can be easily accomplished; therefore, adding a vocabulary component could be overwhelming.

One solution might be to develop a self-access vocabulary program. Such a program could be computerized, could concentrate on direct instruction of high frequency words, and could be related to the integrated units themes. In developing a self-access program, a study component that concentrates on Latin and Greek affixes and stems would be useful since many of the words in the UWL are based on Latin and Greek. "Awareness of word parts has the effect of reducing the number of new words to learn." (Nation, 1994 p. 174)

Conclusion

In this paper we have tried to show the importance of vocabulary learning to students of English, and at the same time provide a rationale for organizing vocabulary training at OJJC according to frequency and theme. We have subjectively created word lists that might be useful in Units 2 to 6 of the first year integrated units. Realizing that the subjective nature of this preliminary project is a weakness, we suggest that explicit testing of students' vocabulary along with teaching of vocabulary either directly or through some form of self-access instruction are the next steps in addressing this important issue.

1 The vocabulary lists were not derived from all possible vocabulary, but from a specific list of high frequency academic English words, the UWL. As Integrated Unit teachers, we used our experience and understanding of the thematic units to assign vocabulary to specific units.

Appendix One: 2,000 word level test from Nation, 1980, pp 265–266

1. original
2. private _____complete
3. royal _____first
4. slow _____not public
5. sorry
6. total

1. apply
2. elect _____choose by voting
3. jump _____become like water
4. manufacture _____make
5. melt
6. threaten

1. blame
2. hide _____keep away from sight
3. hit _____have a bad effect on something
4. invite _____ask
5. pour
6. spoil

1. accident
2. choice _____having a high opinion of yourself
3. debt _____something you must pay
4. fortune _____loud, deep sound
5. pride
6. roar

1. basket
2. crop _____money paid regularly for doing a job
3. flesh _____heat
4. salary _____meat
5. temperature
6. thread

1. birth
2. dust _____being born
3. operation _____game
4. row _____winning
5. sport
6. victory

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